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ABSTRACT

This document is designed to help locate World Wide Web sites relating to education. It briefly describes what the World Wide Web is, what computer and telecommunications resources are needed for optimal access to it, how it works, how a Web Browser works, and what types of information are available on the Web. In particular, the resources available on the United States Department of Education's World Wide Web site are outlined, including: (1) general guides to the department; (2) research synopses and literature reviews; (3) publications for parents; (4) educational statistics; (5) text of department-wide initiatives; (6) educational research and practice reports and studies; (7) resource directories; and (8) department newsletters. Internet addresses are provided for several educational and miscellaneous sites. (BEW)

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Comsumer Guide - March 1996.

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Consumer Guide

Number 15 March 1996

Using the Internet: World Wide Web Pages Featuring Education

What Is the World Wide Web?

OK, so you're poised at the entrance to the Internet and you want to see what's on the information superhighway. A popular window for viewing the information superhighway is the World Wide Web (the Web or WWW). The Web organizes some Internet information so that text, graphics, sound, and video are gathered together into page-like collections for you.

The notable feature of the Web is its inter-linking of documents that enable you to go among and across a series of documents or pages simply by selecting a highlighted word or group of words called a "link." It's like having a table of contents of a set of encyclopedia in front of you; when you find the topic that interests you, you can select the link for that topic and display the document associated with it. Once you are in this document additional highlighted "links" are provided so that you can leap directly to other pages in other volumes as various subjects attract your attention.

What Resources Do I Need?

First, you'll need an Internet account, and a connection to the Internet (through a direct link or via a telephone line). Then you'll need the proper computer equipment, especially if you want to take full advantage of the graphical opportunities in the Web—preferably a high end personal computer setup—that is, at least a 486/50 megahertz CPU running applications under **Windows**, 8 megabytes of RAM, fast access with a 28,800 bps modem, at least a 15-inch monitor, at least a 500 megabyte hard drive, a sound card, and a video card with at least 256 (8-bit) colors. Also, any Apple Macintosh with a 68020 or better CPU will work too.

Finally, you'll need software. Mosaic and Netscape are the two most popular pieces of software, generically referred to as "browsers." With these packages you'll be able to view pictures and graphics at Web sites such as the Louvre art museum in Paris. If you have a slower computer or modem, however, it can take a very long time for pictures to load on your screen, so you may need to use a non-graphical (text-only) browser, such as DOSLynx. DOSLynx displays the text of Web pages or files without the images. You can find both PC-Windows and Apple Macintosh versions of Mosaic and Netscape.

How Does the Web Work?

The computers that hold information for access on the Web are called WWW servers. To find out what information a particular server may contain, you give your WWW browser a URL (Uniform Resource Locator), which serves as an

address that tells the browser both which server to talk to, and which file to get. Generally, if you don't specify a particular file, you'll receive the server's "home page," which is an introduction to the information available on that server. For example, to reach the Department of Education home page you would enter the URL:

http://www.ed.gov/

When you attempt to connect to a URL, you may get a message back saying that a particular address is not available. Often the failure to connect may be similar to a busy signal on the telephone, i.e., all the lines at that address are busy. Sometimes servers have technical difficulties that keep them off-line and inaccessible for only a short period. Some servers are in operation only certain hours of the day or seasons of the year. The point to remember is that you should not give up on an address because you do not make a connection the first time. Try it again later. Also keep in mind that the Web is a very dynamic universe; some URLs will be set up and then either changed or eliminated in a relatively short time. If you happen to enter a URL that has been changed, Web site administrators will often provide you with a new address for that particular document or home page.

How Does a Web Browser Work?

With your browser you can search through the ever-growing treasure trove of information on the Web. Web browsers are flexible and powerful tools. You can, for example, connect not only to WWW sites but also to Gopher and File Transfer Protocol (FTP) sites. Gopher sites consist of interconnected menus that contain mostly text files. Text files do not include the images, sound files, or video that you may find at Web sites. But don't ignore Gopher sites. There are more than 25,000 of them in operation today, and they still contain a great deal of information that may not be available on the Web. As an example, the URL for the Department of Education Gopher is:

gopher://gopher.ed.gov/

FTP sites act as archives for text, binary, and software files. Users visiting FTP sites are looking for specific files to download to their machines. The URL for the Department of Education FTP server is:

ftp://ftp.ed.gov/

What Is Available on the World Wide Web?

All manner of information is available to you on the Web. Given the right kind of computer equipment, you can see text and graphics and hear music and other audio features, even the human voice. Some particularly impressive Web sites are at the Library of Congress (***http://www.loc.gov/***), the Electronic Newsstand (***http://www.enews.com/***), and the Raleigh News and Observer (***http://www.nando.net/***). The Louvre art museum in Paris was mentioned earlier; its URL is ***http://www.emf.net/louvre/***.

Web servers are being created throughout the network of Internet users. The proliferation of servers makes it a daunting task to find pertinent information resources. Two prominent Web sites, both originating at universities, provide a service known as "search engines." Their addresses are:

http://www.yahoo.com/	a subject index of Web sites
http://lycos.cs.cmu.edu/	an Internet keyword search tool

There is a growing number of other sites that provide this service. There is also a specialized search feature available within the Department of Education WWW site, called "Search This Site" at ***http://www.ed.gov/search.html.*** This feature is helpful for browsing through the numerous sections of the Department WWW site.

What Is Available in Education on the Web?

Students and educators at all levels are among the throngs of people gathering at the WWW's window on the Internet. Thousands of schools and educational organizations across the nation have set up Web servers and home pages. On the following page are some established locations on the Web where students and educators have set up their education and information pages for the Internet public.

http://www.ed.gov/	*U.S. Department of Education/Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*
http://www.ed.gov/prog_info/At-Risk/	*National Institute on the Education of At–Risk Students (part of OERI)*
http://www.sedl.org/	*Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)*
http://www.globe.gov/	*Science and math education program in earth/weather science sponsored by National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)*
http://www.socorro.k12.tx.us/	*Socorro Independent School District, El Paso County, TX*
http://nisus.sfusd.k12.ca.us/	*San Francisco, CA Unified School District*
http://cyclops.pei.edu:8001/~briddlkc/swhs.html	*Southwest Science/Math Magnet High School, Kansas City, MO*
http://www.mvhs.edu/	*Monta Vista High School, Cupertino, CA*
http://hillside.coled.umn.edu/class1/cdc/home.html	*Hillside Elementary School, in cooperation with the College of Education at the University of Minnesota*

What Does the Department of Education Have Available on the Web?

The Department WWW site (address given above) has a wide range of material available on-line: reports, lesson plans, ERIC material, agency and staff information. The future holds promise for conducting business with the Department directly through the Web, such as electronically filing grant proposals or responding to requests for comments from the public on research priorities. Categories of information on the Department WWW site include:

Guides to the U.S. Department of Education: general overviews of the Department and road maps to its programs and offices.

Collections of Research Syntheses: concise, research-based synopses and literature reviews of major educational topics.

Publications for Parents: electronic versions of popular pamphlets and brochures designed to address parents' concerns about their children's education.

Education Statistics: an extensive set of statistical tables, charts, and studies produced by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to report the condition and progress of education.

Department-wide Initiatives: a growing collection of information about Goals 2000, Family Involvement, Standards, Technology, School-to-Work, and other major Department initiatives.

Educational Research and Practice-Reports and Studies: comprehensive, timely analyses of major educational topics such as systemic reform, the relationship between time and learning, and research-based transformation of instruction.

Resource Directories: catalogs and collections of information on a wide range of educational programs, events, and organizational sources of assistance.

Newsletters From the Department: periodical publications featuring news about Department initiatives and programs, upcoming events, new publications and services, and the latest research findings and model programs.

Complete documents can be viewed and downloaded from the Department's Web site. Additionally, the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students has the following publications on line:

Education Consumer Guides (Nos. 11, 12, 13, and 14): **Gopher It! Accessing Department of Education Grant Information on the Internet, USENET Newsgroups, Gopher It! Information On-Line at the U.S. Department of Education, and An Introduction to the Internet.**

Other publications, such as Consumer Guides and information about department-funded research centers associated with the At-Risk Institute, soon will be on-line at the At-Risk Institute WWW home page.

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